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ABSTRACT

Honesty on the part of administrators about what goes on in schools is not always the best policy. Schools as organizations lack agreement about goals, means, roles of participants, and historical precedents. Nevertheless, most teachers do a good or average job and most educational results are adequate. Therefore the use of "mystification," "cover-up," and "martyrdom" is the best policy. Mystification may take the form of publicly expressed goals, prophecies, or perceptions of the past that hide the great disagreement among school people on these issues. Cover-ups hide the diverse activities going on in schools by simplification or relabeling of instructional activities. Martyrdom (in the form of resigning a position) may be necessary when other tactics no longer work. Educational leadership depends on a sense of optimism based on the knowledge that average teachers and administrators using average techniques and seeking rather conventional goals can produce good results. Therefore, sagacious educational leaders often merely leave well enough alone. Believing in their own "success" is a serious danger for administrators since they have very little control over what goes on in schools. A good administrator is advised to examine the constructive roles of mystification, cover-up, and martyrdom and to be wary of the destructive role of success. (Author/JM)

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Protecting Private Realities by Managing Public Symbols: Mystifications, Cover - up, and Martyrdom

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My task today is analogous to describing and analyzing the dark side of the moon "as if" it were 1953. The dark side in the 1950's was one of the place we could let our imaginations run wild. We could people that black kingdom with all sorts of monsters or machines -- it could became a playground for fantasy, fiction or fun. Darkness permitted, for instance, 1950's movies to populate that region with science fiction creatures -- things from outer space that came in flying saucers, reproduced by seed pods, and had to be killed by "frying" them in an electric trap. It was not until the 1960's that the dark side of the moon was seen by man -- and our fantasy-making came to an abrupt halt.

In much the same way our image of the school as as organization, of its leadership and administration, has been abruptly altered in the 1970's by the works of James G. March and others.[1] In their descriptions of educational organizations as "organized anarchies," these authors used concepts such as "ambiguous and conflicting goals," "unclear technologies," "fluid participation," "uncertain history," and "loose coupling." While this discussion of educational organizations has taken place primarily in academic and scholarly journals, the March 1980 Phi Delta Kappan introduced the debate to the world of practitioners. Two articles, back-to-back, present the two sides of the discussion.

The first -- by Clark, Lotto, and McCarthy[2] -- presents the "light" side of educational organizations. Schools are seen as organizations in which the "proper" mix of variables produce successful outcomes. Using materials drawn from case studies, research reports, and interviews with experts, Clark and others discern six clusters of critical variables: leadership, personnel, finance, curriculum and

instruction, resources and facilities, and community. While the three sources of information differ (sometimes sharply), all see leadership as important, all stress staff development and in-service training, and all support an emphasis on reading and math achievement. In contrast to the notions of March and others, Clark and his colleagues stress the need to have clear and specific goals, to use multiple (but obviously understood) tactics to achieve these goals, to get teachers working together to create "synergistic consequences,"[3] and to fulfill the objectives proposed by those concerned with improving urban schools.

The second -- by Deal and Celotti[4] -- presents the "dark" side of educational organizations. Schools are viewed as organizations in which what happens at one level of the organization or in one subunit of the organization has almost no impact on other levels or subunits. Basing their arguments on a three year research project in San Francisco Bay area schools, Deal and Celotti argue that:

> Educational organizations appear to consist (at least around instructional matters) of a loose collection of individuals, units, or levels, each performing activities independently -- as segmented units buffered from one another.[5]

Hence, Deal and Celotti find in the core technology of educational organizations great amounts of "loose coupling." Attempts to generate clear and specific goals produce rancorous and debilitating conflicts, to create specified technologies result in deliberate neglect or subtle insubordination, to achieve consensus would result in even greater balkanization, and to try fulfilling goals of distant planners unaware of the realities of the school guarantee a sad farce. Our usual images of leadership and administration, Deal and Celotti conclude, need revision -- they may well need to be literally stood on their head.

I concur with Deal and Celotti's assessment. To that end, I propose in the next few pages to continue speculations[6] about what the works of March and others mean for the practice of school administration. These speculations center around the notions of mystification, cover-up and martyrdom as they apply to the core technology of education -- instruction.

Mystification

Mystification is a key notion for understanding instruction in the public school. To grasp the notion, and its centrality, we need to examine three key propositions about schools as organizations.

Proposition 1: While individuals know what they are about in classroom/ instruction, schools as organizations do not know what they are about.

My first point is that while individual teachers, students, and principals know what they are doing instructionally, there is no collective sense of purpose or mission which dominates schools as organizations. The actors in the school are busy pursuing those instructional activities and goals they see as important. In that sense, each has some sense of what he or she is doing, of why she or he is doing it, and where it leads. But these antonomous and rational actors have only the weakest of images of what the total pattern of instructional intentions looks like, let alone means. The school itself is like some lower order organism, lacking a brain and a central nervous system. The individual actors within the system, however, have brains and central nervous systems, but are afflicted with myopia.

Proposition 2: While most individuals know what they are about in schools, individual actors in schools stress participation, not examination.

Fernandez,[7] for example, notes that field data of anthropologists based on extensive discussions with actors (in this case, members of a Fang reform religious cult) "reminds us of the fact of variation in the individual interpretation of commonly experienced phenomena."[8] Fernandez argues that these variations in interpretations of key religious symbols suggest that often in social interaction "participation" is more important than "thought." Most social settings stress agreements to act in certain ways when confronted by social stimuli. These agreements not only insure "smooth coordination of interaction"[9] but also maintain high levels of social consensus. Put in terms of schools, agreements among actors to play their roles appropriately, e.g., "teacherness," "studentness", facilitate social action.

Those agreements which aid social consensus also mask disagreements about the larger meanings of such acts -- what Fernandez calls "cultural consensus." Fernandez suggests that while members of the Fang reform religious cult may exhibit strong agreement about social consensus -- about the value of participating with others in the prescribed roles of cult activities -- closer examination would find marked differences among actors in their understandings of the larger cultural meanings of cult activities. A find-grained examination of the participants' espoused cultural ends would disclose sharply different conceptions of the nature and heirarchy of ends to be achieved. Fernandez writes:

> Where high social consensus is evident further attempts at the achievement of cultural consensus may be felt to pose ... too many uncertainties and threats to the cohesiveness already established.[10]

Participation along the lines of socially understood and accepted roles facilitates social cohesion not only by making differences in larger

cultural meanings but also by inhibiting those who would seek to examine possible differences.

Though immersion and participation in a stream of commonplace activities, teachers, students, and administrative achieve and maintain "social consensus." These actors subvert both "insiders" and "outsiders" who expose what may well be major conflicts in "cultural consensus" by illuminating differing larger goals held within a single group. I would agree with Fernandez's conclusion that as academics:

> We may tend to overlook the obvious fact that there are many situations in which ignorance is institutionalized and in which social consensus, the so-called existential continuum of uninterpreted interaction, is more highly valued. We may always be too persuaded by the Cartesian premise and overlook a widespread postulate, "I participate therefore I am!"[11]

Immersion in the life of the school (not detached reflection about the life of the school) is honored by these actors.

Proposition 3: The actions of individual actors and the stress on participation become the stuff of organizational sagas and fictions.

In his analyses of the development of three colleges (Reed, Antioch, and Swarthmore), Clark[12] found organizational sagas. Clark argued that:

> An organizational saga is a collective understanding of unique accomplishment in a formally established group. The group's definition of the accomplishment, intrinsically historical but embellished through retelling and rewriting, links stages of organizational development. The participants have added affects, an emotional loading, which places their conception between the coolness of rational purpose and the warmth of sentiment found in religion and magic.[13]

These sagas authenticate the purposes which individuals pursue by supporting both their commonalities with others (loyalty) and their minor deviancies (breaking new ground as the founders did). These sagas also facilitate social consensus by highlighting the accomplishments

and rewards to be earned . . those who participate. In this manner sagas serve to constrain those who seek to change the paths of organizations-- but if those who seek change do realign organizational goals, new sagas soon develop to jusify these changes.

Dubin has noted that organizations also seem to have "fictions."[19] Some of these organizational fictions serve to deal with unknowns -- past, present and future. For example, the history of American education often suffers from fictions about past events. Other fictions disguise the true or emphasize the false. Dubin notes that if the truth is unsettling, "by a kind of silent agreement among members of the organization, this truth is clothed with a fiction."[15] In schools, for example, if teachers know that many students are not achieving at the level anticipated, teachers may suggest a "fiction" that students are not motivated. In contrast, he comments:

> Fictions that emphasize the false are characterized by a more deep-seated reluctant to face up to the truth and are more aggressively oriented toward hiding the truth.[16]

Such fictions may suggest that although teachers have different styles, they seek the same goals or that (vastly different) families really all want the schools to do the same things to and for their (vastly different) children.

These three propositions jointly suggest we should talk about mystification as a process which provides possible public rationales for individual actors. These intendedly rational actors may publicly describe and analyze their private activities, join social groupings within schools which legitimate participation and hinder (if not downright block) analytic examinations, and help create generally shared sagas and fictions. These creative acts, however, produce neither a coherent and singular

set of sagas or fictions nor a heirarchy of goals. Instead, they produce families of sagas, fictions and goals, each bearing some common characteristics but also bearing sharply differing idiosyncratic features.

Moreover, we should anticipate that these public products of mystification should deal particularly with issues which are best kept in private -- ambigious and conflicting goals, unclear technologies, fluid participants, uncertain history and loose coupling. These public sagas and fictions should cloud those issues which might be uncovered by critical examination, should dwell heavily on the values of public participation ("you don't understand because you've never taught subject X or grade Y"), and should help make a private world filled with possible uncertainty, conflict and tension at least liveable, if not always comfortable.

By dealing with these private quandries the process and public products of mystification impregnate the school with what Weber would call traditional authority. It is an authority based upon the awareness of the common values of a culture, and of the social importance of those common valuings. The potential for cultural dissensus is avoided by the willingness to participate -- to accept conventional roles and meanings, and to avoid examining this position for fear that it might not be adequate.

Mystification, thusly, takes on the shape of deliberate self-fulfilling prophecies about the school which each teacher knows if critically examined may not work, but which must be sustained by group members publically if there is to be any likelihood for the prophecy to ever be achieved. Each member of the school faculty, therefore, must say that some greater public purpose may be fulfilled, even though each may

privately doubt the possibility of accomplishing this goal. Most traditional authority is derived from sages saying that at one time the prophecy was fulfilled, the goal achieved. By simply continuing to participate, by doing both what they intend and acting "as if" they see public collective goals being fulfilled, actors increase the likelihood that some larger social good may be achieved accidentally (probabilistically).[17] Critical public examination, in contrast, would reveal significant differences among actors both on individual intentions and goals and on group intentions and goals. These examinations by individuals are deliberately suppressed or are done only privately.

Cover - up

No matter how well mystification may operate, two problems can always be anticipated. First, individual teachers simply do their jobs as they see fit. While this heightens individual rationality, it means that in a larger sense the school is a crazy quilt of purposes. Those forced to explain simply and clearly what "the school" is doing to public audiences are forced to simplify, and hence cover-up, the complexity and potential conflict of the school. Second, the environment doesn't cooperate -- unanticipated events simply "goof up" the best laid plans. What was a trivial and unimportant issue yesterday may well be critical today. Or, the significant and all-consuming passion of society on Friday is seen as inconsequential by Monday. Priorities are unstable as the environment shifts and trembles. (One could imagine a school administrator as an individual trying to thread a needle in an earthquake -- with someone changing both thread and needle every second.)

To the first point. The opportunities for individual teacher differences are myriad. We shall mention only three possibilities -- the

overenthusiastic pursuit of a single way of fulfilling a role requirement ("zealot"), the overly critical examination of the process and products of mystification ("cynic"), and the over-responsive or under-responsive reaction to the environment ("faddist" versus "old-liner"). In each of these cases, the rampant stress on teacher "equality" and "autonomy"[18] not only protects other teachers from the possible consequences of such extreme error-making but also insures that some individualistic error-making will occur. Being "lonely" is an essential part of working in schools because loneliness insures that collegial interactions about the core technology are infrequent. Loneliness facilitates the capacities for individual actors to ignore what others are doing and to pursue diligently the particular means or ends they see as important at that moment.[19]

For those who are forced to represent the school to the public, e.g., principals or superintendents, the teacher norms of autonomy and equality mean that what goes on in the school is driven by the interests of individual teachers and students. When pressed to explain why different teachers do different things to and for students, representatives must fall back on a rhetoric of cover-up. This rhetoric suggests that those who are doing the work are motivated by a common sense of purpose, are well-trained and respected by knowledgeable experts, and are clearly in command of the situation. This rhetoric emphasizes the supposed influence of the superordinate administrator on subordinate workers, the purported acceptance of a hierarchy of goals by all school personnel, and the imagined close linkage among actors in the system, e.g., fifth grade teachers prepare students for sixth grade activities. The cover-up makes the school appear to be a superably rational, highly programmed machine with almost endless adaptation to input

inconsistencies, limitless capacities in reshaping and redesigning the conversion process, and near perfect uniformity in schooling outcomes.

This cover-up rhetoric also benefits another purpose. The public stress on the rationality of the larger institution permits teachers and administrators who simply wish to participate to repair to a conventional, convenient and acceptable way of talking about what they do. For those who participate -- probably the bulk of teachers and administrators -- the larger public image of corporate rationality provides a handy way of fitting larger purposes or activities to what they say they do. This linkage means that actors can participate without inquiring deeply into either the validity or the reliability of the goals expoused. In contrast to those who see themselves as zealout, cynic, faddist or old-liner, participants may feel less lonely and more collegial because they feel grounded on common purposes and understandings now in vogue. By not examining what they are doing, those who participate are able to make rational their actions as a significant and integral part of a larger set of beneficient activities.

Hence, cover-up activities not only make rational the larger organization to the environment but also provide rationalizations for internal participants. But this cover-up activity provides an important element of self-fulfillment to the culture of those who work in schools. The larger sense of public purposes which cover-up activities "create" implies that various actors can "accept the assumption that the organization is effective."[20] And privately believing they are effective may <u>in fact</u> heighten the public effectiveness of teachers.

Cover-up activities also are necessitated by a second major factor -- the environment. The constant shifts in demands from a highly segmented

and differentiated environment (better, "environments") force administrators and teachers to constantly justify what they are doing. This constant pulling - and - hauling to stay current produces a vocabulary filled with images of wars between "us" and "them," and a frenetic set of activities in which brief, but frequent, meetings predominate.

One tactic used to lessen the negative consequences of this constant struggle over priorities is diverting resources to create favorable public images.[21] Athletics, music, drama or community-service activities all drain some resources from vital educational areas to generate (hopefully) more positive images of the school. While the costs of such activities may seem high to some (gyms larger than libraries or carpeted athletic field but tile floors in classrooms), the argument that public benefits exceed these educational costs usually carries the day.

But the more general tactic used to cover-up most problems generated by environmental demands is the redefinition of the "old" to fulfill the "new." This verbal sleight-of-hand allows the magical transformation of "exams" into "competency based tests" by the simple stroke of a pen. "The conscious re-labeling of routine activities to meet the new demands of publics" may well be the best definition we have in education of "implementation."

Such a redefinition of implementation seems justified on two counts. First, the very nature of the core technology of education -- teaching -- seems individual work.[22] The upshot of the studies of educational implementation conducted over the last decade, for example, provide further support to this proposition. We are confident that teachers tacitly "know" what they are doing, what will or will not "work" for them, and what criterion or criteria they use to "evaluate" their work.

Efforts by outsiders to introduce "new" ideas are successfully thwarted time and time again as teachers use their tacit knowledge to "select," "adapt," or "totally ignore" what they wish of the new. There is, much literature suggests, no reason to believe that there are controls ("brain," "central nervous system") which determine what all the elements in the school do. Rather, we have in schools a colony of individually purposive cells which are not linked by a "brain" or a "central nervous system" but by saga, fiction, custom and slogan. In this highly differentiated colony, nonetheless, we can anticipate (by chance expectations) that some teachers are actually fulfilling the newest mandate or demand. All administrators have to do us to point to these "innovators," and then suggest that other teachers are moving slowly toward this newest of educational panaceas.

Second, the elaboration of "new" goals may well pull some of those who chose to participate to these new or to some slightly different goals. This pull occurs because of pluralistic ignorance [23] or deliberate ignorance.[24] The argument from pluralistic ignorance would suggest that while each teacher <u>privately</u> knows that the rhetoric of the administrator is fraudulent, in <u>public</u> each teacher could make only supportive statements. Since teachers do not know that other teachers truly believed the rhetoric to be false, they would make sincere individual efforts to try and perhaps to achieve a rhetorical goal no individual privately thought possible. (In these nationalistic days following the Winter Olympics we might re-name this phenomenon the "American hockey team effect.")

Moore and Tumin have explored carefully the positive benefits of deliberate ignorance. They have noted, for instance, that "traditional

behavior depends in part upon ignorance of alternatives."[25] In this sense, the socialization of teachers and administrators to their roles:

> ... serves to protect the traditional normative structure ... through reinforcing the assumption that deviation from the rules is statistically insignificant.[26]

If we link the willingness of many educators to simply participate, the extensive amount of pluralistic ignorance found in schools, and the substantial role of deliberate ignorance in creating lack of awareness of deviancy, we have created a rationale for covering up. "Covering up" permits autonomous individual teachers to be linked to greater social purposes or to trivial re-labelings.

Martyrdom

Leadership on the dark side of the moon is a dicey occupation. Its greatest hazard is neither failure nor averageness: it is success. We shall return to elaborate this point and it's relation to martyrdom after exploring two primary notions about educational leadership -- optimism and uncertainty.

First, and foremost, educational leadership depends upon an absolute sense of optimism. This optimism is based on the assumption that average and conventional individuals (most teachers and most administrators) who use average techniques and who seek rather conventional goals are able as a collectivity to produce unusually good results. There is something almost magical about the generally good results that occur in American education. It is enough to make one believe that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, or that pluralistic ignorance is blessed.

Such results occur, I would argue, because sloppiness is built into the educational system. This sloppiness manifests itself, first, in the

great amounts of redundancy that occur. Landau, for one, has argued that redundancy is important in human systems because it "is a powerful device for the suppression of error."[27] If we were to engineer a school as a tightly coupled, linear system in which on a specific day, at a specific time, each child learned a specific item, e.g., 8X8=64, then if for any reason a child missed that moment, the system might collapse. Landau suggests that tightly coupled human systems are:

> ... a form of administrative brinksmanship. They are extraordinary gambles. When one blub blows, everything goes. Ordering parts in series makes them so dependent upon each other that any single failure can break the system.[28]

A second form of sloppiness values deviancy. As noted earlier, pluralistic ignorance and deliberate ignorance provide "cover" for possible deviancy. In this sense, the large amounts of individualism in schools accentuates opportunities by try out new ideas (even if sometimes we have only reinvented the wheel). Scott, for example, hypothesized that:

> ... when social ties between groups are weak and tenuous, the standards used to evaluate behaviors which deviate from the ideal are lax, and when social ties are strong and enduring, standards for evaluating such actions are strong.[29]

Lacking sanctions to control behaviors means that deviancy may provide creative new options or simply reinforce redundancies for students. Not knowing or not being evaluated may provide constant stimuli to creativity -- creativity which might be squelched by evaluations by veterans who "know" that a "new" idea is really an "old" bromide.

These, and other sources of organizational sloppiness, suggest that sagacious educational leaders often leave well enough alone -- anticipating that what is happening today may well change for the better tomorrow. This sense of cock-eyed optimism rests on the

genuinely held belief that those who don't like teaching simply get out -- and those that have stood the test of time are generally adequate, if not slightly above average.

But sloppiness also lets the educational leader strike forth with bold new ventures. Our person from La Mancha may tilt with any windmills he or she chooses, just so long as she or he remembers that not all will join in this venture. A symbolic attack, nonetheless, through the "magic" of pluralistic ignorance, may produce very real results. Equally, when viewed from a distance, the charge may fail -- but hidden within the dross may well be nuggets of success. These steps forward -- even though they may seem smaller than any great leap forward -- may be important. For example, Marz[30] has noted that efforts to use sophisticated management techniques such as management information systems often fail. While these techniques are initially adopted because they appear to be "magical" cures to bureaucratic uncertainty, these new rituals simply don't work. However, these failures often produce valuable benefits. Older, entrenched division heads may be replaced or central authorities may gain power, for instance.

The other essential element of educational leadership is an understanding of the nature of uncertainty. We need to distinguish two differing senses of the concept. In analyzing the nature of uncertainty in medical practice, Davis suggested that we must:

> ... distinguish between "real" uncertainty as a clinical and scientific phenomenon and the uses to which uncertainty -- real or pretended, "functional" uncertainty -- lends itself in the management of patients and their families by hospital physicians and other treatment personnel.[31]

When the physician is certain and the prognosis is given the patient,

Davis suggests we have "communication." On the other extreme, if the physician is uncertain and the prognosis is not given the patient, we have an admission of "real" uncertainty. Between these two options exist opportunities for "dissimulation" -- functional reduction of patient uncertainty to enhance the physician's "reputation and livelihood"[32] or "evasion" --the physician is certain but the prognosis is not given the patient because this enhances the management of the patient and family by the physician.

In education I believe much of our uncertainty is "real" -- we are unable, for various reasons, to overcome what Campbell and Stanley label factors jeopardizing internal and external validity.[33] Factors such as history, maturation, and selection as well as representativeness all help create the aura, and the fact, that much of educational activity is truly uncertain. We are constant victims to significant shifts not only in our subjects but also in the environment -- shifts which disrupt whatever certainty we seemed to possess at any one moment in time.

The educational leader's belief in uncertainty is a faith driven by the sense that tomorrow will be unlike today. Those activities today which produced major victories, if applied tomorrow, may result in crashing losses. Equally, a strategy which fell in deaf ears today may bring cheers tomorrow. Significant shifts in the environment, sudden breakthrough discoveries by colleagues or smiles of approval must be treated as moments to be treasured, but not hoarded. Real uncertainty, grounded on a sense that change is everconstant, implies that efforts to create routine, to make permanent, or to develop standard operating procedures will always be thwarted by fate -- fate in the guise of changing environemntal conditions, insensitive peers or too creative

others. To administrators, real uncertainty seems best translated into the most famous of Murphy's Laws: "If anything can go wrong, it will." And to be summed up (sadistically) in Murphy's Philosophy: "Smile... tomorrow will be worse."

Yet rarely are administrators faced with dramatic shifts. Rather, most administrators force a daily existence which produces minor crises -- incremental movements best measured in terms of inches, not feet or yards. It is against the "ordinary-ness" of administrative work -- the infamous alligators in the swamp that attack the administrator's posterior -- that we must compare most issues of uncertainty. In "ordinary-ness," the problem is not one of reacting to major shifts in the environment but rather one of striving to find larger, emerging patterns in a mosiac of commonplace events. The maintenance of sensitivity becomes the bane of most school administrators. It becomes easy, downright seductive, to engage in the helter-skelter of activities without pausing for reflection. There is always the luxury of simple participation.

The crux of the problem generated by reflection about patterns which may be emerging is scale. Just how long a ruler must be used to measure the timeliness of the shape which may be emerging? Is it one month, one year, one decade, one generation or one nation's history? What are the patterns of relationships which exist between obvious short-term and long-range outcomes? Nagged by quandries such as these, retreating to moment-by-moment problems seems a sane gambit.

Yet optimism and uncertainty are sides of the same coin. Combined they suggest an inherent belief in a normal distribution of educational events -- some sixty-eight percent will be adequate with sixteen percent failures and sixteen percent successes. The optimistic but uncertain

administrator wisely plays the odds -- some eighty-four percent of the time reasonably good results will occur. Under these conditions the wiser course is to be optimistic -- things will generally turn out all right. Equally, wisdom implies uncertainty. Our base of knowledge is too weak to engineer success, even if our subjects and the environment both were kind enough to be still for a moment. Unfortunately, neither has the patience of a two-year old child.

Optimism and uncertainty, nonetheless, create the groundwork for tension between educators and publics. Not only do educators and publics quarrel about the goals of education, the needs of educators to be able to protect uncertainty often crystallize into conflicts. At a general level these conflicts take the form of struggles about professional antonomy. Professional antonomy legitimates optimism, redundancy, deviancy, self-fulfilling prophecies, and real uncertainty. This press for antonomy aims to guarantee educators the room they need to fulfill the optimism inherent in the normal distributions of educational outcomes. Put another way, the price professionals ask of the public is one of sixteen percent "failure" versus eighty-four percent "adequacy." To help maintain this sort of distribution pattern, administrators mystify and cover-up.

When this pattern is no longer acceptable to publics, administrators face the likelihood of martyrdom. More precisely, we should speak of "symbolic martyrdom." We shall examine this particular notion from the perspective of the superintendent -- although it can happen at the other adminstrative positions to be found in education. Symbolic martyrdom occurs when the incumbent superintendent is in conflict with the school board and community about a major policy issue, e.g., school

closings, desegregation, collective bargaining strategy. The superintendent offers his or her resignation to the board claiming that this dramatic move is prompted by her or his concern for the good of the schools and of the entire community.

Such a "selfless" act, nonetheless, provides three important benefits for superintendents. First, in this gesture of martyrdom, professionals are able to control their destiny even though they may be well aware of the awesome power of the board and the community. By choosing to leave before "they" remove them from office, superintendents assert the free will of autonomous professionals. While clearly recognizing the limitations imposed by public control, the act of martyrdom asserts the even grander vision of moral authority held by resigning superintendents.

Second, the act of martyrdom is a part of the professional's constant struggle to make the school system better. Whether fought for teachers, for the improvement of conditions, or for students, issues diminish before superintendents' commitment to educational improvement. While superintendents may win some and may lose some, in these battles superintendents must capture the flag of a better tomorrow. If a battle goes against superintendents, the act of symbolic martyrdom permits a victory for the office even while signaling a defeat for the individual. By underscoring that the everpresent forces of evil-- "those who oppose improving educational services for children"--must be battled, the act of resignation simultaneously underscores the weakness and limitations of a single superintendent while asserting the purity of the office. No shame is felt by those who retreat today so that they may fight tomorrow--in a different site.

Finally, the act of symbolic martyrdom provides important cohesiveness to the professional community. The complete identification of the individual martyr to improving the whole society through education of the future generation not only enhances the prestige of the office but also builds an important image of heroism for fellow superintendents. Those witnessing the symbolic demise sympathize with the tragic loss of a comrade, assist in finding a new position in a better community, and feel anointed by the goodness of their colleague. They now have a legitimate, vivid and herioc image of the price they may be called upon one day to pay for the improvement of American education. Their peer "has not died in vain"; they are able to rededicate themselves in his memory to the noble profession they have chosen. Hence, for superintendents symbolic martyrdom legitimates the assignment of important descriptors to the role. Superintendents, as all martyrs, are "selfless," "inspired," "wise," "visionary," and "heroic."

For members of the school board and community, symbolic martyrdom also has three consequences. First, the act of resignation helps soothe community tensions. The act of symbolic martydom may "short-circuit" tensions before they erupt as conflicts which might result in nearly irreversible cleavages among various community factions. The act of resignation may not only introduce ambiguity about who is to blame for "this mess" but also direct community action to the future resolution of the problem.

Second, the departure of the superintendent quiets discussions about the unwillingness of this superintendent to act as the board and community wished. A close analysis of the entire situation might uncover a morass of conflicts of interest, intrigue, and petty hostility. The

superintendent's public departure forestalls, and frequently forecloses, the airing of dirty linen. This act of civility and discretion--more like the behavior of a Southern gentleman than a Yankee carpetbagger--dampens discussions about the superintendent as incompetent to manage conflict, unwilling to clean up that can of worms, or too stubborn (or too stupid) to listen to community sages. Martyrdom permits forgiveness, as well as strengthening a begrudged image of the moral worthiness of superintendents.

Finally, the act of symbolic martyrdom enhances the power of the incoming superintendent with the board and the community. The position of the board and community is now one in which they must decide what they want done. The creation of this rationale ("mandate") for the successor weakens the bargaining power of the board after hiring. By being precisely clear about what they want, the board allows the new superintendents to reassert certain prerogatives. New superintendents claim they can only accomplish these priorities if they are given certain concessions. All other assessments by the board are now considered irrelevant while new superintendents work their way through the "mandate." Those who follow in the footsteps of martyrs are themselves seen as good --at least for a couple of months.

Hence, the actions of the board may help the community find ways to see itself with a larger image of improving their schools. All should now see that boards ought to improve their schools, ought to work with good educators, and ought to continue to hire superintendents who are capable of symbolic martyrdom. Communities, then, ought to avoid superintendents who are "selfish," "routine," "dull," "common," and "average." To provide contrasts between "average" and "good," communities need martyrs --once in a while. Martyrdom must remain a rare

event if it is to provide important consequences for all participants. Too much martyrdom wears thin. Hence, we should anticipate that mystification and cover-up are the more frequently used tactics of school administrators.

Standing in stark contrast to these successful maneuvers is the fatal flaw of school administration -- "success." The worst possible administrative behavior is to believe that what you did as an administrator really "caused" a good outcome. While it is safe, and comforting, to believe that you as an administrator may have helped in part or by accident to create a scenario which may have worked this time, any self-congratulations beyond that point become exceedingly dangerous.

The logic of this claim is straightforward. First, an administration rarely controls enough resources to "cause" teachers to do exactly what that administrator might wish/want/demand. Second, left to themselves teachers will produce average or "adequate," and occasionally "good," results. Third, even if the administrator could structure a situation so that teachers were cowered into behaving a certain way, the administrator could not know what the outcomes would be (real uncertainty) and could not control environments long enough to insure the program was ever put into effect. These conditions all suggest that what fundamentally happens in schools is beyond the direct control of the administrator. Indirectly, nonetheless, the administrator can: first, select "good" teachers; second, provide what teachers appear to want anticipating that this may facilitate their work; and, third, hardly ever deny teachers the opportunity to explore new opportunities or options presented by their teaching situations or the environment. What this suggests is that wise administrators are optimistic --anticipating good

things will happen -- and opportunistic -- highlighting the happy mix of individuals, techniques and times which may produce good results.

In this kind of a world, a good administrator acts more like a gardener than a computer programmer. Instead of believing that a single set of instructions will always produce a good output, the administration knows that the particular weather of this season, and a particular seed and fertilizer, may mean that this year's rose was better than last. Good administrators and good gardners know that what they do is strongly influenced by forces beyond their control. Unfortunately, both often fall prey to believing that which they did "caused" the results. They immediately follow this "success" with efforts to design more successes by programming and structuring the forces around them. In education "success" means concerted efforts to create formulas, e.g. "leadership kits,"[34] "teacher-proof materials," "fool-proof instructions," which end up completely missing the factors that initially produced success. We should find wisdom in another of Murphy's Laws: "Every solution needs new problems."

I do not wish to suggest that administrators are never successful or never have successes. They do. But I do wish to point out that wise administrators do not seek to replicate success. Instead, they adjust in two ways. First, they recognize that a successful outcome can be a "fluke" -- a statistical outlier that may never happen again. Second, they behave in ways that permits them to examine closely the configuration of events which produced success. This examination looks both to find patterns or deep structures, and to explore accidents or idiosyncrasies. The examination is sensitive to the likelihood of these events ever coming this way again. By these means, administrators are

able to examine the constructive roles of mystifications, cover-up and martyrdom, and to be wary of the destructive role of success.

Summary

I seriously doubt that honesty is the best policy. It may well be that honesty does work if there is agreement about the goals sought, means used, roles of participants and historical precedents. But schools as organizations lack these characteristics. Under these conditions the deliberate use of mystifications, cover-up and martyrdom is the best policy. These, and other administrative tactics, are successful because average teachers to their job, rhetorical slogans about educational goals are privately doubted (if thought about) but are publically effective (in general), and real uncertainty is a source both of optimism and of concern.

Real uncertainty, generally (and fortunately), works to the advantage of those who see administration on average as a creative task much like growing beautiful gardens. Real uncertainty also continuously whets the appetites of those who wish to know and to understand education. What we must never forget is that real uncertainty is at the heart of the great success of educational administration -- the fulfillment of larger social purposes by groups of individuals who in private doubt that they can achieve much, but who in public produce adequate or better results most of the time. What good administrators do is to capitalize on public successes while they isolate "cynical" individuals so that private doubt never spreads. By keeping teachers lonely, good administrators help produce adequate or better group results. To obtain such a public good, they mystify, cover-up and infrequently suffer martyrdom. For administrators, it is simply all in a days work.

FOOTNOTES

1. See, for example, Michael D. Cohen, James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen,

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2. David L. Clark, Linda S. Lotto, and Martha M. McCarthy, "Factors Associated with Success in Urban Elementary Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, 61 (March, 1980), 467-470.
3. Clark, p. 470
4. Terence E. Deal and Lynn D. Celotti, "How Much Influence Do (and

Can) Educational Administrators Have on Classrooms?" Phi Delta Kappan, 61 (March, 1980), 471-473.

5. Deal, p. 472
6. See Martin Burlingame, "Some Neglected Dimensions in the Study of

Educational Administration," Educational Administration Quarterly, 15 (Winter, 1979), 1-18.

7. James W. Fernandez, "Symbolic Consensus in a Fang Reformative Cult,"

American Anthropologist, 67 (1965), 902-929.

8. Fernandez, p. 906.
9. Fernandez, p. 922.
10. Fernandez, p. 922.
11. Fernandez, p. 925.
12. Burton R. Clark, "The Organizational Saga in Higher Education," Administrative Science Quarterly, 17 (June, 1972), 179-184.
13. Clark, p. 178.
14. Robert Dubin, "Organization Fictions" in Robert Dubin (ed.), Human Relations in Administration with Readings. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1968, 493-498.
15. Dubin, p. 496.
16. Dubin, p. 496.
17. This argument parallels the argument about "wise men" made in Karl W. Deutsch and William G. Madow, "A Note on the Appearance of Wisdom in Large Bureaucratic Organizations," Behavioral Science, 6 (January, 1961), 72-78.
18. Dan C. Lortie, "The Teacher and Team Teaching: Suggestions for Long-Range Research," in J. T. Shaplin and H. F. Olds (eds.), Team Teaching. New York: Harper & Row, 1964, 270-305.
19. In contrast, information about the status hierarchy of the system or about working conditions may move quickly through the system. See Mark Hanson and Flora Ida Ortiz, "The Management Information System and the Control of Educational Change: A Field Study," Sociology of Education, 48 (1975), 257-275.
20. W. Keith Warner and A. Eugene Havens, "Goal Displacement and the Intangibility of Organizational Goals," Administrative Science Quarterly, 12 (1968), p. 544.

21. Charles Perrow, "Organizational Prestige: Some Functions and Dysfunctions, "American Journal of Sociology, 66 (January, 1961). 335-341.

22. See, for example, Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller, "The Social Realities of Teaching," Teachers College Record, 80 (September, 1978),54-68.

23. John S. Packard and Donald J. Willower, "Pluralistic Ignorance and Pupil Control Ideology," Journal of Educational Administration, 10 (May, 1972), 78-87.

24. Wilbur E. Moore and Melvin M. Tumin, "Some Social Functions of Ignorance," American Sociological Review, 14 (1949), 787-795.

25. Moore, p. 791.

26. Moore, p. 791.

27. Martin Landau, "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap," Public Administration Review, 29 (July/August, 1969), p. 347.

28. Landau, p. 354.

29. Robert A. Scott "Deviance, Sanctions, and Social Integration in Small-Scale Society," Social Forces, 54 (March, 1976), p. 612.

30. Robert H. Marz, "Myth, Magic, and Administrative Innovations," Administration & Society, 10 (August, 1978), 131-138.

31. Fred Davis, "Uncertainty in Medical Prognosis, Clinical and Functional," American Journal of Sociology, 66 (July, 1960), p. 41.

32. Davis, p. 47.

33. Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, Experimental and Quasi - Experimental Designs for Research. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966, p. 5-6.

34. Thomas J. Sergiovanni, "Is Leadership the Next Great Training Robbery?" Educational Leadership, 36 (March, 1979), 388-394.